

A National Strategy for the Conservation of Collections

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Abstract

This article relates the history from the nineteen seventies through the nineteen eighties of how a national plan for the care of collections was developed through the combined efforts of several national professional organizations. The pioneering work of the National Conservation Advisory Council is reviewed and its 1981 metamorphosis into the National Institute for Conservation, now Heritage Preservation, is described. How various studies and reports produced by the American Association of Museums, some in conjunction with the National and American Institutes for Conservation, helped inform a national strategy for the conservation and documentation of collections, is discussed. As the first elected chair of the board and council of the National Institute for Conservation, the author describes how the new organization contributed to the national planning process with projects like the Bay Foundation initiative to develop curriculum and train collections care specialists, Save Outdoor Sculpture (SOS!), and the Conservation Assessment Program (CAP).

Introduction

Throughout the nineteen seventies many national, governmental, professional, and private not-for-profit organizations and individuals worked in a rather uncoordinated way to develop a national strategy for the conservation and documentation of collections in the United States. Attempting to bring some order to this process, a national organization developed and helped shape a number of action initiatives as they evolved. In the nineteen seventies this organization was called the National Conservation Advisory Council. It became the National Institute for Conservation in 1981 and renamed itself Heritage Preservation in the nineteen nineties.

Much of the federal and private foundation grant funding available today for the conservation of collections evolved and grew as a direct result of the pioneering efforts to develop a national strategy. Like all funders, each of the organizations involved had a consistent primary premise to maximize the impact of its resources. The result over the past three decades has been a quantum leap forward in the care of the nation's collections. While individual program efforts have played a significant role in helping accomplish this success, the 1980's Bay Foundation funded project to develop curriculum to train individuals in collections care and maintenance put in motion a whole new direction for the conservation profession whose potential is still far from being realized.

A Short History of “Heritage Preservation, The National Institute for Conservation,” and Related Efforts

Appropriately, it seems that the first attempt to develop a national strategic plan for conservation originated in Washington, DC, as part of federal government. Tax monies like most efforts of this sort fueled it. Senator Claiborne Pell, after visiting art conservation facilities, decided that the United States needed a National Institute for Conservation housed in a marble edifice in the nation’s capitol—not unlike the National Institutes of Health. Some of the Washington-based, key players who began to explore the feasibility of a National Institute for Conservation were Livingston Biddle, Special Assistant to Senator Pell, Peter Powers, General Council for the Smithsonian, and Paul N. Perrot, Assistant Secretary for Museum Programs in the Smithsonian. Mr. Biddle had worked for Senator Pell some years earlier to draft the legislation that led to the National Arts and Humanities Endowments, as well as with Peter Powers to help create the National Museum Act (NMA), whose chief administrator was Paul Perrot. At a feasibility meeting sponsored by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and held at the Winterthur Museum, Garden and Library in June 1973, Powers presented a two-page document (mostly the work of Paul Perrot) that contained thoughts on the possibility of establishing a coordinating agency for a variety of conservation efforts in the country. Twenty-five participants, including myself and representatives of the graduate-level conservation training programs in the United States, attended the meeting. Coincidentally, at the same meeting, Powers presented copies of a Bill he was working on which would found an “Institute for the Improvement of Museum Services” later to be established as the Institute of Museum Services (IMS), and subsequently expanded as the “Institute for Museum and Library Services” (IMLS). The new institute was to include, as it does to this day, funding for conservation projects.

Not surprisingly most of the dialogue that occurred in response to the Perrot/Powers discussion paper centered on the membership of this proposed advisory council. For example, what would be the role of the American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (AIC) and how would its then 498 members be represented. Ultimately it was agreed that members of the U. S. International Centre Committee of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation would form the core of the new National Conservation Advisory Council (NCAC). Since funding was already in place for this international committee to meet annually in Washington, travel economy dictated future meetings of the proposed national group would be held back-to-back with the international committee. The meeting concluded with a unanimous vote to move ahead with the establishment of a national advisory council on conservation.

With initial funding from the National Museum Act (NMA), the National Conservation Advisory Council (NCAC) was born. At the first meeting, in November 1973, Edward Gilbert was elected president. In the year that followed, council members soon realized the daunting reality of the tasks they had taken on. Most of the work of the organization was to be done voluntarily, with a skeleton support staff conducting daily business in a Smithsonian office. It became apparent that in order to do a reasonable job of designing the role of a possible National Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Property, various aspects of a rapidly growing conservation profession had to first be thoroughly studied. In addition, federal arts agencies were eager to fund various aspects of the national conservation agenda and wanted to use the findings of the council as quickly as they could be produced. As a result NCAC developed a number of study committees working simultaneously to produce published documented findings and recommendations. In

December of 1975, Robert Feller became NCAC President and worked tirelessly to get the various study committee reports into print. The Chairman of the Museum Program of the NEA, John Spencer, was particularly anxious for recommendations on regional conservation centers, which it was prepared to support along with graduate-level conservation training programs, as had his predecessor, Thomas Leavitt, who pioneered these efforts at NEA.

The first published report from NCAC appeared in March 1976, produced by the Regional Centers' Study Committee, chaired by Marigene Butler. Among the general recommendations included in the twenty-five-page report was the idea that museums needed to develop preventative conservation plans as well as (1976, 3) "the provision of direct treatment for objects requiring special attention." In the same year NCAC issued a second published report titled *Conservation of Cultural Property in the United States*. It was (1976, v.) "the council's first and preliminary analysis of conservation needs and possible corrective actions." The report identified five broad areas of need with the first being the training of conservation personnel. A subsection of that area, the training of conservation technicians, was mentioned but NCAC's Committee on Education and Training deferred specific recommendations pending further study. The second half of this report began to deal with just what functions might be appropriate or inappropriate for a National Institute for Conservation. Three specific functions were excluded: NIC should not be a centralized conservation treatment facility, a training facility, or be involved in the development and establishment of standards of professional qualifications for conservation training and practice.

The following year, 1977, saw the *Report of the Study Committee on Architectural Conservation* published. In July 1978 NCAC released a *Discussion Paper on a National Institute for Conservation of Cultural Property*. This paper justified the need for, outlined the functions of, projected a structure and even estimated some preliminary expenses, not including any building costs, for a national institute. The chairman of the study committee was Sheldon Keck. Later in the same year the *Report of the Study Committee on Libraries and Archives* released followed, in 1979, by the *Report of the Study Committee on Scientific Support* and the long awaited *Report of the Study Committee on Education and Training*. While this report had more to add on the subject of training conservation technicians, it basically said such training was not a good idea and that it should be limited to (1979, 12) "what will satisfy the needs of the individual institution." Interestingly though, under the heading of "Curator Education in Conservation" a number of technical topics were suggested as appropriate for one to two-week seminars for this profession. They included causes and evidence of deterioration, methods of inspection and examination, environmental protection, preparation for exhibition, handling, packing, shipping and standards and ethics in conservation.

In 1980, NCAC published two reports. The first was *Suggested Guidelines for Training in Architectural Conservation* and the second *Conservation Treatment Facilities in the United States*. In some ways this last report expanded upon NCAC's very first report on regional centers, used by John Spencer. By 1980, John was Chairman of the Art Department at Duke University and also served as chairman of the NCAC Study Committee on Conservation Treatment Services. While primary financial support for the efforts of NCAC continued to come from the National Museum Act, several other federal and private foundations including the NEA and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, helped support activities and publications.

Although Fellows of AIC had been surveyed as part of the process of developing the 1978 *Discussion Paper on the National Conservation Institute*, published copies were sent to all AIC members in August of that year. A follow-up request for comments on the discussion paper was sent in 1979, resulting in about fifty responses from members who were largely supportive of the concept. In total some two thousand individuals and organizations having direct responsibility for cultural property were sent the discussion paper for comment. At the 1980 annual meeting of AIC in San Francisco, Marigene Butler, then president of NCAC, led a lengthy discussion session on a proposed NIC. The AIC general meeting approved a resolution conditionally endorsing the general concept. Later in 1980, a new NCAC working group that included myself was busy with an actual proposal for a National Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Property. In September, I was named chair of an AIC study committee on a national institute and made its representative participating in NCAC's executive committee's deliberations on the NIC. In March of 1981, I resigned from NCAC's working group to solely represent AIC in discussions. I did, however, accept the NCAC executive committee's offer to attend relevant meetings where the subject was discussed in order to transmit AIC concern. That same month NCAC issued a draft sequel to the 1978 discussion paper on an NIC. It was edited to eliminate inconsistencies and to clarify meaning and re-titled "Interim report on a concept for an NIC" and circulated to the AIC and Association for Preservation Technology (APT) memberships for their further input. A number of AIC members took the time to communicate their thoughts on the concept to me. The most outspoken of these was Caroline Keck who, in an open letter to me dated June 4, 1981, urged her colleagues not to support the creation of NIC. She wrote "a national institute for conservation never appealed to me as valid. I believe that today Senator Pell would raise no violent objection to having the concept discarded . . . establishment of such an agency appeared unwarranted duplication of what could be the responsible performance of a strong AIC."

The next year saw a number of NCAC task forces all working on parts of the proposal for NIC. At the fall 1981 council meeting of NCAC, I was elected president of the organization. Coincidentally, I had chosen that year for a partial sabbatical and had reduced my working hours as Director of the Center for Conservation and Technical Studies (now the Straus Center for Conservation) at Harvard University. Little did I know just how fortuitous that decision was because my volunteer work with NCAC rapidly became very demanding. But the main credit for what was accomplished in the next year, culminating in the publication of *The Proposal for a National Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Property* in April of 1982, belongs to the extraordinary administrative and organizational skills and just plain hard work of NCAC Executive Director, David Shute. The other person who was a committed, influential supporter of the work of NCAC was Paul Perrot, who continued in his post as Assistant Secretary for Museum Programs at the Smithsonian. In personal correspondence we had in November of 1981, he wrote that he felt it was a critical time for NCAC and the "home stretch for the National Institute." It was, indeed, a critical time for NCAC because after seven years of uninterrupted financial support from the NMA, its board felt that the NCAC Council should make its recommendations on NIC and disband. At the same time work on the final "Proposal for an NIC" was being completed another conservation fact-finding mission was underway internationally. This work was being done principally by program development officer at the J. Paul Getty Foundation, Nancy Englander, in close association with the Chairman of the Board of the Getty Museum Trust, Harold Williams. In March of 1982 they sent a highly confidential, rough draft of

how a proposed Getty Conservation Institute might augment conservation efforts worldwide. Much of their plan looked very much like the NIC proposal, of which they had been sent draft copies. In the Getty draft they acknowledged that they “particularly benefited by the work done by the NCAC over the last seven years, examining the conservation problems in the United States for the purpose of development of a plan for a National Institute to address them.” The problem was that the Getty’s aspirations were worldwide, not just national, and while they seemed ready to implement many of the major parts of the NCAC proposal, there were some rather large elements that were not of immediate interest to them.

At first it was hoped that the Getty might provide the funding to implement NIC but it quickly became apparent from several face-to-face meetings with Getty representatives that they had in mind an “institute” located in California with their name on it and international rather than national in its scope of activities. While delighted that the Getty Trust, with its significant financial resources, was interested in helping to implement some of the primary recommendations of NCAC, many of us feared that other important national conservation needs and the strategies for addressing them would lose serious momentum if the complete NCAC proposal was not published. Also, at the time, the Getty Conservation Institute draft proposal was a rather short (eleven pages) and vague document that articulated ideas rather than concrete plans. Beyond just the publication of the NIC proposal, concern also arose that the establishment of a Getty Conservation Institute (GCI) implementing only some elements of the NIC national strategy would mean those elements not included would lose their advocate with the disbandment of NCAC. Foremost among these were national libraries and archives, architectural, and anthropological and archaeological conservation needs. It was also unclear how much, if any, attention the Getty would give to historic artifacts versus those from art museums. Against this backdrop and mindful of its original mandate, the Board of Directors of NCAC decided not only to publish the proposal for a national institute in its entirety but also to include in the introduction to the document just how NCAC would metamorphose into NIC.

Thus, the proposal was published in April 1982 and at the April 23rd council meeting of NCAC, Gretchen Ellsworth, NCAC Secretary, and I signed an Amendment to the Articles of Incorporation of the NCAC, legally changing its name to the National Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Property, incorporated. It was envisioned that the transition between the former advisory activities undertaken by NCAC and the full implementation of services and programs in the NIC proposal would take two to three years. It had taken eight years to bring to reality, at least in name, what Senator Pell had envisioned. In response to an update from Paul Perrot on the founding of NIC, the senator wrote in a letter dated September 20, 1982: “I continue to enthusiastically endorse the concept for such an Institute and stand ready to lend any assistance that I can to nurture it along.”

Financial support for the organization was a first critical order of business. Even before the transition took place, Paul Perrot had written in a letter dated April 19, 1982, indicating that the National Museum Act Council had been “on the verge of suspending further support to NCAC.” Fortunately, he had then led a lengthy discussion that persuaded them to reconsider and to continue some funding for another year. In addition to that, in November an “Extraordinary Chairman’s Grant” was received from NMA to help defray staffing costs for the transition period and to assist in convening the first meeting of the new NIC Board of Directors. One of NIC’s

first grants came from the J. Paul Getty Trust to support the new position of a development officer for two years. By May of 1983, NIC had received modest additional grant support for specific projects from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for a brochure on *Careers in the Conservation of Cultural Property*, from the Design Arts Program of NEA for a *Quantification Study of Historic Buildings* and from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission for the *Development of Standards for the Storage of Paper-Based Library and Archives Materials*. As part of the transition towards a new organization with a different mission, former NCAC standing committees were disbanded and new committees were created on a project-by-project basis. NCAC had achieved many of its primary objectives: “to identify major national needs and problems in conservation and offer recommendations for their solutions; to recommend programs that would result in a coordinated national policy and plan for the conservation of cultural property; and to consider the advisability of creating a National Institute for Conservation.”² NIC had been created to further the national policy for the preservation of cultural heritage in the United States, not by an act of Congress but rather as a non-profit organization with a mix of federal and private funding including modest membership fees that its member organizations contributed. Although NIC did not even closely resemble the design proposed a year earlier by NCAC, it continued to help shape a national strategic plan for conservation. I believe that the best evidence for this assertion is found in its work and in publications that all occurred in the year 1984.

The American Association of Museums (AAM) was responsible for two of these publications, which still stand today as far-sighted and well-researched, reasoned and articulate strategic plans. The first, supported by several private foundations, and entitled *Museums for a New Century, A Report of the Commission for a New Century* consisted of a 144-page book that offered and justified sixteen recommendations. The first two recommendations both stress the need for conservation planning in relation to collecting and study. Much in the same way that NCAC’s 1978 discussion paper referred to and quoted from the AAM’s 1969 *The Belmont Report*, this important AAM study referred to and quoted from the work of NIC in the section which introduces the third recommendation, titled (1984, 40-41) “Collections Care: A Chronic, Unquantified Problem.” In the commission’s findings leading to their fourth recommendation, it states (1984, 52): “the museum community must strengthen its commitment to the organization and care of collections. This means there must be concerted efforts to acquire and organize information about the quantity and location of objects, assess and make known the maintenance and preservation needs of collections, strengthen institutional commitment to collections care and maintenance, and promote an understanding of the critical needs of collections among policy makers, funding sources and the public.”

My participation in The New Century Colloquium that focused on “collecting and caring for the cultural and national heritage” led directly to my inclusion in another AAM project and their second important 1984 publication: *Caring for Collections, Strategies for Conservation Maintenance and Documentation*. This brief 44-page booklet of a National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) funded study, remains in print to this day. The publication relied on the testimony of conservators whose names were suggested by Pieter Meyers, then AIC president, and myself in a joint letter to Lawrence Reger, then Director of AAM. I believe its longevity and multiple printings are due to its coming closer to outlining a national strategy for collections care in museums than anything else in print. In fact, it is even organized as a strategic planning

document starting with five basic priorities for collections care, management and use followed by bulleted, step-by-step recommendations for action. The concept that in many respects most influenced my own subsequent professional goals was clearly articulated in this booklet (1984, 25): “Conservation and documentation are two sides of the same coin, and those responsible for these functions must work closely together to assure the well-being of collections. Increased museum staff cooperation among curators, conservators and registrars will lead to greater benefits for collections as a whole.”

Appendix A in the book describes in detail how the overall project was conducted starting with a series of five colloquiums. Among the participants in the conservation colloquium I hosted at Harvard’s Fogg Art Museum was Carolyn Rose, then Director of the Anthropology Conservation Laboratory at the Smithsonian Institution. I had come to know and respect Carolyn because of her work on NCAC’s Committee on Anthropological Conservation, which had met in Boston in November of 1981. The work of this committee led to one of NIC’s first action items, supported by a grant from the NMA, the development of *A Suggested Curriculum for Training in Ethnographic and Archaeological Conservation*. In addition to Carolyn, this curriculum committee included several distinguished and experienced professionals: Terry Drayman Weisser, Director of Conservation at the Walters Art Gallery, as Chair; Richard I. Ford, Curator of Anthropology at the University of Michigan; Heather Lechtman, Professor of Ancient Technology and Director of the Center for Materials Research in Anthropology and Ethnology at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology; and Eugene Sterud, Archaeologist and Director of the Division of Research Programs at NEH. The curriculum was distributed in December 1984 as part of a set of two NIC publications, the other being *Ethnographic and Archaeological Conservation in the United States*, supported by the National Science Foundation. The curriculum also was published in an abridged form in December of 1984 by NIC with a grant from the Getty Trust as part of the proceedings of the tenth annual Conservation Training Program Conference hosted by the Center for Conservation and Technical Studies (now the Straus Center for Conservation) at Harvard University. Some two decades later a program has finally been established along the lines of this curriculum at the University of California, Los Angeles under the direction of Dr. David Scott.

In December of 1984, NIC released yet another strategic publication funded by the NEA entitled *Historic Buildings: A Study on the Magnitude of Architectural Conservation Needs in America*. Work on the content of this study had begun in 1979 with the NCAC Subcommittee on Historic Properties, part of a larger quantification study group. The other report to be issued in 1984 by NIC, with support from the NMA, was *Proposed Priorities for Scientific Research in Support of Museum Conservation*. Like the previously mentioned NIC strategic publication, this report was an extension of the work of an NCAC Study Committee, this one on Scientific Support, that had published its preliminary work five years earlier. Regrettably, the new report noted that in the intervening years, there had been no net increase in the number of conservation scientists providing support for conservation in the United States. In response, NIC undertook the work (1984, 1) “of establishing some priorities for this area in order to provide a general blueprint to assist funding organizations and scientific facilities in focusing on areas of much-needed scientific research.” Now, two decades later, thanks to the Getty Conservation Institute, and more recently the Mellon Foundation, real progress is being made in this area.

Also in 1984, NIC became involved in two projects that were focused on long-range strategic conservation planning. The first was a project that came at the urging of Congressman Sidney R. Yates of the U.S. House of Representatives and was later realized as a \$150,000 appropriation to the Institute of Museum Services (IMS). It was a study of collections care needs in the United States to be undertaken by the AAM in cooperation with NIC and AIC. As the introduction to the final document, *Collections Management Maintenance and Conservation, a Study of America's Collections* explains, the study was composed of two major research projects, a museum collection survey and a survey of conservation professionals and facilities. Four additional smaller projects included in the study were—conservation information and training programs for museum professionals and the general public; private sector support for collections' needs; federal funding of conservation and collections management in museums; and last, methods of inventory control and collections management.

Although the lead organization for this project was AAM, large portions of the work fell to NIC and some to AIC. For example, AAM subcontracted NIC for the major research project to survey conservation professionals and facilities. Ultimately, when published in 1985, this massive report provided IMS and the other federal agencies offering conservation grants with a much clearer picture of the nations' collection needs and helped establish priorities for their care. For example, this report helped the nascent IMS conservation grant program to focus its priorities for conservation funding. For three years, starting in 1984, I chaired and co-chaired the IMS conservation grant review panels for non-living collections and saw first hand what a huge impact this matching funding had on helping to establish conservation priorities in U.S. museums. Several of the report's findings had a profound impact on the design of the IMS conservation grant program. Statistically valid surveys found that the condition of forty percent of the nation's collections was unknown, that twenty-seven percent of collections needed conservation, and that seven percent were in serious need of treatment, defined as in danger of partial or complete loss if not treated promptly. Seventy-two percent of the museums participating in the survey project had no written long-range conservation plan and most of those with plans were zoos and botanical gardens. As a result, IMS and other federal funding programs began to force museums to survey, develop and establish conservation long range plans, and to prioritize the projects with the greatest impact on the care of their collections. Exhibition-driven conservation grant requests could rarely be justified when contrasted with number one priority proposals for improvements in climate control and art storage. When museums were asked to rank their priorities for collections care, the statistical standings came out as follows: 1. conservation of the collections, 2. computerization of inventories and catalogues, 3. developing adequate storage spaces, 4. upgrading temperature and humidity control, 5. education of museum personnel, 6. examination of collections conditions. I believe this list, along with National Museum Services Board (NMSB) discussions and decisions regarding conservation priorities, has strongly influenced the content of the IMS conservation grant program for almost two decades. It has similarly influenced conservation collections care grant programs in other federal agencies and private foundations.

On March 19, 1985, I testified before the subcommittee of the House of Representatives Committee on Appropriations, sponsor of the IMS Collections Management Maintenance and Conservation study. Speaking on behalf of AAM, NIC and AIC, I said the results of this study represented not just perceptions, but facts that accurately assessed the conditions and problems

that existed in museums at that time. My testimony further noted the huge disparity between the number of facilities and individuals engaged in conservation and the estimated number of museums and museum objects in the United States. It described under-developed areas of conservation and conservation training in general and justified priorities for federal and private conservation funding programs. At that moment, it felt like we at last had a national strategy for conservation and that we were presenting it to an important audience who had it within their power to help us achieve a number of goals. In a February 1988 study mandated by Congress and conducted by IMS, they calculated that in fiscal year 1985 federal conservation grants to museums totaled \$14,654,681.

Another national conservation need that NIC started to address during my tenure as Chair of the Board and Council was the care of outdoor sculpture. My involvement with the project, known today as Save Outdoor Sculpture (SOS!), started in 1984 when then Governor of Massachusetts, Michael Dukakis appointed me to a Scientific Advisory Council on Acid Rain. I quickly learned through my participation with this group, that at least one of the causes of the deterioration of outdoor statuary, environmental pollution, was a national problem. During a conversation with art historian colleague Michael Richman, Editor of the Daniel Chester French papers at the National Trust for Historic Preservation at the time, we got the idea to inventory and survey the conservation needs of publicly accessible monuments in the United States. After approval from the NIC Board, I presented a four-phase program to the October 16, 1984, Council meeting who generally agreed that this kind of project was much needed and very suitable for NIC. A joint proposal, with the National Trust for Historic Preservation, for the first phase of the project (called the Public Monument Conservation Program) was drafted for NEH. The project did not advance with NEH funding and the National Trust decided it was not a priority for them. NIC found a new partner in the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) and a new proposal was sent to the Getty Trust who awarded a \$139,000 grant for the Public Monument Conservation Program pilot project in July of 1985.

Today SOS! is one of Heritage Preservation's key programs. To date 33,000 pieces of outdoor sculpture throughout the United States have been surveyed and entered into a publicly accessible national database at the Smithsonian American Art Museum. Professional conservators have assessed the condition of six hundred outdoor sculptures. Heritage Preservation has made matching grants to conserve more than 120 of these. Target Stores, the NEA and the Skaggs Foundation have provided support for these grants. Over \$8,000,000 has been spent on behalf of outdoor sculpture and volunteers have devoted countless hours to promoting the goals of SOS! Lawrence Reger, President of Heritage Preservation, reports that an extensive series of publications and videos has been produced to help public sculpture owners create and apply collections management policies, as well as to promote educational programs using outdoor sculptures. The most recent publication is *Tips, Tales and Testimonial*, a compilation of information and anecdotes from SOS!'s years of experience with community groups and conservation professionals. A traveling exhibit, "Preserving Memory: America's Monumental Legacy" will have gone to every state and the District of Columbia by the spring of 2005. Using roughly 200 images on 20 stand-alone panels, this NEH funded exhibit gives local outdoor sculpture a national context.

Returning to 1985, Larry Reger, then AAM Director, wanted to put together another joint

venture working cooperatively with NIC, as they had on the IMS conservation study. He arranged a meeting in New York City including the two of us and Gerald George, then Director of AASLH. Larry had been asked by the Charles Ulrick and Josephine Bay Foundation to develop a proposal to encourage cooperative efforts for the care of collections. Their interest had apparently been sparked by the then recently released AAM publication *Caring for Collections: Strategies for Conservation, Maintenance and Documentation* Larry prepared for the meeting by producing a five-page draft proposal that opened as follows: “Collections are the heart of every museum: without them there would be no research or interpretation, in effect, no reason for being. As museums approach the 21st century, collections care—maintenance and conservation—will be an important topic of discussion.” After a day and an evening of discussions and deliberations, we agreed the proposal would focus on the training of specialists in collections care. We would ask the Bay Foundation to support a multi-stage project—to identify twelve museums to submit proposals to and then, to select from them four who would be awarded grants to develop and conduct pilot collections care training programs over a three-year period. Each of these museums and hence their curriculum, would represent a different category—art, archaeology and ethnography, history and natural history. A common thread was that the programs would be developed and team-taught by curators, registrars, and conservators. They also would share training objectives, including the development of better care, accessibility, and use of the participating museum’s collections by providing training in six areas—environmental monitoring and control; storage and exhibition techniques (matting, framing, mounting); inventorying and cataloguing; conditioning and technical examination; numbering and labeling; and packing and handling. Safeguards were to be designed into the project to assure the trainees would make a difference in their own museums using what they had learned during the program. Each of the suggested curriculums was to be published. The entire project was to be overseen by an advisory board and the directors of each of the four programs were to meet collectively from time to time with the advisory board to share and compare experiences.

At the end of the day, the only thing left undecided was which of the three national organizations we represented should take the leading administrative role in conducting this large project, estimated to require over a half million dollars. The next day Larry asked me to present our proposal to the Bay Foundation officials, particularly as I had argued and persuaded both Larry and Gerry to include natural history collections in the mix despite the improbability of their being of interest to the Foundation. At the end of the meeting Robert Ashton, Executive Director of the Foundation, expressed his interest in seeing a formal proposal and asked which organization would be submitting it. Larry answered, NIC.

On January 13, 1986, the Bay Foundation issued a press release when the first three museums had been selected to conduct the pilot training programs. The release stated that the programs were designed “to create a new kind of museum profession” called “Collections Care Specialists,” who would be trained for roles in “planning and implementing long-term care and maintenance procedures. The collections care specialists are expected to assist registrars, curators, conservators, and others whose traditional skills and abilities are vital to maintaining the nation’s vast holdings in museums of all sizes and descriptions.” It went on to list the Art Institute of Chicago, the Arizona State Museum, and the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History as each receiving awards and that a history museum would likely be named later.

It quoted the Foundation's Chairman, Frederick Bay: "Collections care has been identified as a national priority. By laying the ground work and providing support for these pilot training programs, we expect it will be easier and more economical for other museums and institutions to address this urgent demand for collections care." Soon afterwards a fourth participant, the Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum in Texas was included in the project.

At the October 16, 1985, NIC Council meeting I completed my three-year term and Carolyn Rose was elected to the position of Chair. I continued to volunteer for NIC, most significantly as chair of the Advisory Panel to the Bay Foundation Collections Care and Maintenance Pilot Program, which I worked on from its inception until the last curriculum were published in 1991, and in a number of roles for SOS!

As Chair, Carolyn Rose was not only enthusiastic about the Bay Foundation project, but also served as one of the instructors in the pilot programs for Natural Sciences at the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County and for Archaeology and Ethnography at the Arizona State Museum. The courses themselves were intensive and, depending on how they were organized, up to six weeks long often with a break after three weeks. In addition to the practical knowledge and skills participants took back to their own museums, the courses produced invaluable, up-to-date bibliographies on the specific topics taught. As a result, during her tenure as Chair of NIC, Carolyn envisioned the Collections Care Information Service (CCIS) utilizing as a foundation, the 1985 *The Conservation of Cultural Property: A Basic Reference Shelf List* assembled by former NIC board member James Bernstein. *Collections Care: A Selected Bibliography* was published by NIC in 1990. I summarized my own thoughts and observations on the Bay Foundation project in a letter to its Executive Director, Robert Ashton, dated April 14, 1988: "The pebbles we collectively tossed in the pond of collections care have made ripples in a circumference we did not anticipate." Of all the areas that statement seemed to apply most to natural history museum collections where the impact was the most magnified, particularly through organizations like the Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections (SPNHC). Other federally and privately funded programs went on to use the Bay training models but the one with the most consistent program has been the Campbell Center for Historic Preservation Studies in Mount Carroll, Illinois. Their 2004 course catalog states that their collections care core curriculum is based on the Bay pilot and has been offered since 1990. NEH has been a consistent supporter of scholarship funds for these courses.

In August of 1985, I had been asked by the Virginia Association of Museums (VAM) to act as chief consultant for a proposed conservation awareness and collections care workshop series, which was to include the production of three technical information leaflets. One of the leaflets was to cover the care of collections, another textiles, and the subject of the third leaflet was to be determined at the completion of the workshops. The other consultants were Pamela Young Randolph, paper conservator in private practice in Virginia, and Jane Hutchins, Chief Conservator at the Textile Conservation Center in North Andover, Massachusetts. VAM received partial funding from NMA and additional grant funds from the Virginia Commission for the Arts. We prepared and conducted the three workshops back-to-back in October of 1986 in three different cities in Virginia. All that remained was to produce the three technical leaflets. We decided to use the opportunity to contribute to the national conservation strategy being advanced by IMS.

As previously mentioned, the governing board of IMS, NMSB, had established priorities for funding in its new conservation grant program, influenced by the joint study conducted by AAM, NIC and AIC in 1985. But each year the IMS panel of conservators and curators who met in Washington to review these funding priorities was asked to make recommendations to the NMSB for possible changes. Conservation surveys had been rising higher on the list of priorities since the inception of the program but I was aware that the 1987 conservation project support grant guidelines reflected an even more pro-active stance than had been taken before by the board and the agency. Surveys of collections and environmental conditions, including the development of long-range conservation plans became the first priority for funding. In the February 1986 issue of *Museum News* Barbara Applebaum and Paul Himmelstein had written an excellent article on *Planning for a conservation survey* but no one had clearly defined what a long-range conservation plan should look like or contain. The three conservation consultants for the VMA set out to try to fill this gap since it appeared that the funding agencies were moving ahead faster than the conservation profession. The three separate leaflets became one, containing three articles. *Conservation Surveys* authored by Jane Hutchins, *Long Range Conservation Planning for Museums* by me, and *Museum Housekeeping: Developing a Collections Maintenance Program* by Pamela Randolph. After an initial local distribution by VAM, a reprint of three thousand copies was done in 1987, with seven hundred copies sent to IMS so they could be used to inform applicants to the conservation grant program. Other federal and private grant programs requested and received them as well.

In 1986, Jane Hutchins became Co-chair of the IMS conservation review panel and the following year President Reagan appointed me to the National Museum Services Board where I continued to help implement national conservation strategies under the administrations of Bush and then Clinton, until I left the NMSB in 1995. Larry Reger left AAM in 1986 and in 1988 became the salaried President of NIC, replacing Director, David Shute who had resigned due to ill health. One of the first projects Larry initiated at NIC with Carolyn Rose was the Conservation Assessment Program (CAP) a sister to the Museum Assessment Programs (MAP I and MAP II) at AAM, which are administered by IMLS with federal funds to serve the needs of small museums. The CAP project was a complex one with a number of phases and, with NIC as the lead organization, the project was to be carried out in conjunction with AIC and APT. The first phase was project planning with representatives from NIC, AIC, APT, AAM, AASLH and others, meeting together. This phase also included the creation of survey forms and guidelines and museum questionnaires, all of which could be used by conservators to provide a more uniform approach to assessing general conservation needs. A number of museum professionals were to be involved in this project. Phase II was intended to create a pool of qualified surveyors by conducting training workshops at the annual meetings of AIC and APT. Phase III was to be done independently by AIC and APT and involved the development of a pilot referral system. For the users of conservation services, the final phase involved the administrative mechanisms needed to run CAP, such as setting up application procedures and forms, devising a review system and a method for providing the surveys as well as evaluating procedures in general. All this was to be overseen by an Advisory Committee. Among many others, Carolyn and I ultimately served on that committee. In May of 1990 a two-day AIC pre-conference session was held in Cincinnati, Ohio, called "The Conservation Assessment: A Tool for Planning Implementation and Fundraising." It was sponsored by NIC, GCI and IMS. Among the featured speakers were Paul Himmelstein, Program Chair of the AIC annual meeting, and Carolyn Rose.

CAP has been running very successfully as a program of Heritage Preservation and IMLS since 1990 and has played a major role in national strategic conservation planning.

Under Larry Reger's administration, a greater degree of financial stability was achieved, particularly with federal support, as NIC became "Heritage Preservation." The organization gave written congressional testimony in favor of a successful eight million dollar increase in NEH's appropriations to preserve brittle books and to encourage the use of permanent and durable paper to help alleviate future conservation problems. Testimony by the directors of three important museums presented on March 22, 1989, articulated the main role of NIC as "a national forum where conservation and preservation needs, including preventive care, are evaluated, resources are identified, information is gathered, conservation and preservation activities are coordinated and national strategies are articulated." The testimony went on to quote from the 1984 NIC reports on ethnographical and archaeological conservation and training in the U. S. and on how these collections needed environmentally-controlled storage for their preservation. The IMS study was cited, along with other studies, to help define the dimensions of the need nationally. Then the testimony described a possible new NEH program, the National Heritage Preservation Program, which would establish federal matching support for capital improvements related to collections care. Grants could be up to one million dollars and be matched over a five-year period. The second part of this ambitious proposal directed federal and matching funds towards training programs to improve collections care, as well as the training of conservators. The Bay project was described as a model. Lastly, funds were proposed to help start a graduate program to train conservators in the specialty of ethnographic and archeological conservation. NEH's Heritage Preservation Program became a reality in 1990 and it continues to this day as "Stabilization of Humanities Collections." The work, of course, is far from done, and in some ways has perhaps just begun. The effectiveness and success of national conservation efforts in the future will continue to be dependent upon cooperation between a number of professional organizations, agencies of the federal, state, and local government and organizations like Heritage Preservation, the National Institute for Conservation that look at the bigger picture, develop national strategic plans, and help guide their implementation.

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Notes

1. Unpublished meeting minutes from June 1973.
2. Unpublished NIC document.